

Following World War II, the City emphasized a more comprehensive approach to planning to understand the relationship between land use, transportation and city services. The original 1923 ordinance was replaced in 1957 with a plan developed to complement a comprehensive plan coordinating transportation and land use.

Starting mid-century, Boeing, and later Microsoft, brought a new era of growth. The outlying towns grew, as well. Freeways and bridges were constructed or expanded to improve the transportation system between Seattle and the emerging suburban cities. This regional expansion resulted in new challenges – sprawl and traffic congestion – and Seattle’s planning efforts turned to stabilizing and attracting growth as the city’s population declined. Much of the planning activity focused on accommodating the automobile, by then well established as the dominant mode of transportation.

Increased emphasis on accommodating growth resulted in a reaction that fostered the city’s early preservation efforts. When Pike Place Market and Pioneer Square were threatened with demolition in the early 1970s, grassroots efforts succeeded in establishing both as historic districts. Maintaining the city’s rich urban heritage has increasingly become an important planning objective.

Also in the 1970s, the Seattle 2000 Commission was formed to provide a new direction for growth and development in Seattle — a direction that more strongly emphasized maintaining the positive characteristics of the city, with less priority for accommodating the automobile. Planning activity through the 1980s initiated by the work of the commission was later furthered in the 1990s by the Washington State Growth Management Act, which directed cities like Seattle to prepare comprehensive plans consistent with the state’s growth management objectives. Seattle adopted its Comprehensive Plan in 1994 and is committed to updating the plan every 10 years, with the first update being issued by the end of this year.

Over the last decade, Seattle has transformed yet again. It has grown as a cultural center, gaining global recognition. Immigration has increased and Seattle has matured into a truly international community defined by our rich diversity. Today, the computer-related and biotechnology industries are allowing the city’s economy to evolve in new ways. A vibrant downtown, strong neighborhoods, a demonstrated commitment to arts and culture, and an increasingly diverse community enable the City to continue to attract bright, young people from all over the world.



1963 Monson Pike Market Plan

*“Seattle has many positives to build upon. We need to make the most of our planning challenges and opportunities... and reach the full potential of this spectacular city.”*

— Diane Sugimura, Director, Department of Planning and Development



Yesler Terrace 1941



Pike Place 1970



Aurora Bridge 1932



L-90 Floating Bridge 1945



Viaduct Construction 1951



Freeway Construction 1967



1962 Seattle World's Fair